



Michael R. Pence, Governor
State of Indiana

Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services
402 W. WASHINGTON STREET, P.O. BOX 7083
INDIANAPOLIS, IN 46207-7083
1-800-545-7763

FINAL RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Request for Funding RFF 2016-09

Establishment, Development or Improvement of Non-Profit Community Rehabilitation Programs

**Questions containing similar context and receiving similar answers were grouped together.*

Question: In order to assure that we can sustain this program, we wondered if we can expect an increase in the number of external VR referrals?

Response: The referrals to VR have increased this past year and the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) anticipates that additional referrals to VR is likely given new requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); however, BRS is not able to project the impact this may have on any specific provider.

Question: In the Training Section, I am wondering if training costs funded by VR such as EST training and the Intensive 3-day workshops offered by Hands in Autism can be included in the RFF?

Response: The purpose of the Establishment project funding is NOT to cover the CRPs existing costs of training. Rather, Establishment project funds support costs associated with developing or enhancing training, and could also include training costs for newly hired staff. If the training mentioned in the question results in added costs of enhancing training for the CRP, they may be included. Additionally, training costs included in the proposal must enhance the effectiveness in providing VR employment services, including supported employment, to applicants or eligible individuals.

Question: Did VR factor in hourly services given to high school students due to WIOA?

Response: The Bureau is unclear on the context of the question but assumes it is in regards to pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS). The services carried out through pre-ETS are not tied to the Establishment Projects.



- Question: To what extent can you support existing staff to build their persons job skills? Are there any limitations to that?
- Response: The purpose of the Establishment project funding is NOT to cover existing costs of training. Rather, Establishment project funds support costs associated with developing or enhancing training. Additionally, training costs can be included in the proposal as long as the proposed training enhances the effectiveness in providing VR employment services, including supported employment, to applicants or eligible individuals. Establishment project funding will also NOT cover existing staff costs. Establishment Project funds will only support the added costs of building staff capacity including the cost of additional staff or additional duties of existing staff that enhance employment services provided.
- Question: How is VR going to build their capacity to accept clients and process referrals?
- Response: VR is continuing to develop and implement strategies to build VR staffing capacity. General inquiries about VR services can be submitted to vrprovider@fssa.in.gov.
- Question: Where is VR with centralized billing?
- Response: The Bureau is unclear on the context of the question but assumes it is in regards to VR's initiative to work towards the development of a 3rd party claims payment system. VR recently issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) and anticipates awarding the contract to a vendor in October 2016. General inquiries about VR services can be submitted to vrprovider@fssa.in.gov.
- Question: Can funding be used to change a current structure of training to be more efficient or do we need to create new training initiatives?
- Response: Training funds may be utilized to either develop or enhance current training to increase the CRP's effectiveness in providing VR employment services, including supported employment, to applicants or eligible individuals.
- Question: Does VR have a preference of new training versus collaboration with other CRP's on current training practices?
- Response: No, the determination to develop a new training versus enhancing an existing training can be made by the CRP.

- Question: Is the dollar match a lump sum or do you pay each year? Can you pay throughout the year or set up a payment plan? If you do a lump sum match payment up front, will you get reimbursed if outcomes are not met by the CRP?
- Response: The CRP's share of funding (non-federal match) must be deposited electronically to a designated state account on a monthly basis. BRS will bill each CRP monthly for the non-federal CRP share. CRP's who are awarded Establishment project funds will receive additional information regarding the electronic deposit and filing of claims for payment. CRPs will be reimbursed for appropriately billed services as long as the non-federal match is deposited within the timeframes established by the state. Please note that this response reflects the anticipated payment schedule and is subject to change.
- Question: What happens if CRP's build staff capacity and VR cannot process the referrals to those staff?
- Response: BRS has received feedback from providers regarding a need to increase staff capacity in order to serve existing consumers and provide adequate support to those with the most significant disabilities under the new VR employment service model. With the change in the VR Employment service model, there is an expectation that Employment Specialists increase the intensity of services to consumers. The Establishment projects are intended to build staff capacity to address this need.
- Question: How will the funds/payments be claimed? What supporting documentation is necessary to draw the funds, etc.? Please explain payment mechanism.
- Response: CRPs awarded a contract will receive a claims packet. Generally with a submitted monthly claim, supporting documentation would include itemized actual costs pertaining to the items billed (i.e. salary, fringe, training and associated costs).
- Question: Can staff hired in support staff positions, i.e. secretaries, be included and paid out of this RFF?
- Response: No, funding may not be utilized for support staff, only for staff directly providing the employment services, such as employment consultants and job coaches, and supervisory staff who directly supervisor the employment services staff. Additionally, Establishment Project funds will only support the added costs of building staff capacity including the cost of additional staff or additional duties of existing staff that enhance employment services provided.

Question: Can an existing support staff from another program within our organization be reassigned to our employment program, at a % of her time and that time be included in the grant?

Response: Possibly, if this is an added cost, but more information is needed to determine if this is allowable. Establishment project funding is NOT intended to cover existing staff costs. Establishment Project funds will only support the added costs of building staff capacity including the cost of additional staff or additional duties of existing staff that enhance employment services provided. Additionally, costs of increased staff capacity must enhance the CRP's effectiveness in providing VR employment services, including supported employment, to applicants or eligible individuals.

Question: Will travel, equipment, supplies, utilities, leasing and other administrative costs for new staff be able to be included in the CRP's share or is this in addition to?

Response: Funding for travel, equipment, supplies, utilities, leasing and other administrative costs for direct service staff and supervisory staff who directly supervise employment services staff, are additional dollars that would be provided by the CRP, as necessary and appropriate. The funding for these items are NOT allowable Establishment project costs and are NOT included in the cost-match. Please note that the CRP will continue to receive fee-for-service reimbursement for services carried out by employment services staff, in line with the VR Manual of Employment Services. Those VR fee for service funds typically contribute toward administrative costs.

Question: Could you please provide detail of what types of costs are reimbursed for training (e.g. registration fees, mileage/travel, parking fees, purchase of workbooks, travel time, etc.).

Response: Allowable training costs may include training fees, certifications, travel costs associated with training, training materials, curriculum development, and other related costs, for both direct service staff and supervisory staff who directly supervise employment services staff. Examples of 'other related costs' may include, but are not limited to, registration fees, parking fees, and lodging.

Question: Can you please provide guidance on how much of a current supervisory staff's salary and benefits are allowed to be included in the budget? What criteria should be considered (e.g. time spent on grant administration, percent of indirect time, percent increase in new staff under the grant, etc.)?

Response: The CRP needs to determine how much additional oversight, guidance and technical assistance will need to be provided to new and/or existing staff over the four year grant

period as a result of enhancing employment services. The added costs need to be a result of changes made to the supervisor's current role. For example, a supervisor may currently spend 50% of his/her time managing a case load, and 50% of his/her time in a more traditional supervisory role, mentoring employment specialists. As a result of enhancing the CRP's employment services, the supervisor's case load is transitioned to another staff member and the supervisor now devotes 100% of his/her time supervising and mentoring employment service staff. Because the supervisor has enhanced his/her role to support employment service staff, establishment project funds could be used to support the newly-added 50% supervisory and mentoring time.

Question: Can training costs of current employment staff be included in the budget or is it just for new staff projected to be hired under the grant?

Response: Establishment project funding is NOT intended to cover existing staff costs. Establishment Project funds will only support the added costs of building staff capacity including the cost of additional staff or additional duties of existing staff that enhance employment services provided. Additionally, costs of increased staff capacity must enhance the CRP's effectiveness in providing VR employment services, including supported employment, to applicants or eligible individuals.

Question: Cummins has a question around turnover and how that counts when factoring in new staff hired for the grant. If a current employment specialist separates from Cummins next May, does the replacement fall under one of the new FTEs in which we have requested in the grant, or is this an additional hire but both will be counted as 'new' under the grant?

Response: The CRP should build the Establishment project budget based on the staff position(s). If a staff person is hired and then resigns and is replaced, the funding for the replacement would still fall under the same funded position. Please note, Establishment Project funds will only support the added costs of building staff capacity including the cost of additional staff or additional duties of existing staff that enhance employment services provided.

Question: In building the staffing budget, do we assume Year 1 costs are for the period March 1, 2017-February 28, 2018, Year 2 from March 1, 2018-February 28, 2019, etc.?

Response: Yes, for purposes of the Establishment Project, the timeframes would be as follows:

- Year 1: 3/1/2017 - 2/28/2018
- Year 2: 3/1/2018 - 2/28/2019

- Year 3: 3/1/2019 - 2/28/2020
- Year 4: 3/1/2020 - 2/28/2021

Question: If we expect to bring on new staff members during different months during Year 1, do we prorate their salary/benefit costs for the number of months they are employed during the period March 1, 2017-February 28, 2019, or do we indicate their full 12 month salary/benefit in Year 1 column?

Example: New employee #1 begins March 1, 2017=100% salary/benefit in Year 1 budget?

New employee #2 begins June 1, 2017=75% salary/benefit in Year 1 budget?

New employee #3 begins Sept 1, 2017=50% salary/benefit in Year 1 budget?

OR would we indicate three new employees in Year 1 at 100% of their 12 month salary/benefit (regardless of anticipated hire date in Year 1).

Response: Staffing costs should be based on the number of new employees you anticipate hiring in Year 1 to enhance employment services, and the number of months you anticipate for them to be employed. The same is true for Years 2, 3 and 4.

Question: On page 5, objective 2, you desire services to be initiated within 10 business of days of referral. Our agency policy, which has been supported by VR, is to not begin services until an authorization is received. Many times, the authorization is not received with the referral and may not be received for a week to 10 days after the referral. Can the objective be modified to be 10 days from receipt of the authorization?

Response: Thank you for the feedback. BRS will seek specific feedback on specific measures when developing the measurable objectives for the scope of work and contract.

Question: Relative to training, are costs associated with agency and CARF required training, such as First Aid and CPR, allowable?

Response: No, as these are trainings the CRP is regularly required to participate in to stay certified, and are therefore existing training costs, and not new costs. Additionally, these trainings do not have a focus on enhancing the provision of employment services and competitive, integrated employment outcomes, and therefore are NOT allowable costs under the Establishment project funding.

Question: Are overnight accommodations and food expenses for training provided out of town allowable?

Response: Lodging and per diem are allowable travel costs associated with training, if these items are added costs resulting from enhanced training, and the training assists employment service staff with enhancing their foundational competencies, at a minimum, with the items listed on page 4 of the RFF, and meets all other requirements outlined in the RFF.

Question: Can out of state training such as national conventions, etc. be covered by training funds and is air travel an allowable expense?

Response: Yes, out-of-state training and air travel are allowable expenses as long as these items are added costs resulting from enhanced training, and the training assists employment service staff with enhancing their foundational competencies, at a minimum, with the items listed on page 4 of the RFF, and meets all other requirements outlined in the RFF.

Question: Relative to training, is the CRP responsible for additional cost share besides the 21.3% match?

Response: For allowable training costs that are submitted in the RFF cost proposal, the CRP share is 21.3%. Any training costs not outlined in the proposal, or not aligned with the requirements of the RFF, will be the CRP's responsibility.

Question: On page 5, objective 3, may we choose between increasing the number of individuals served versus increasing the amount or duration of supports? What documentation will you require from a CRP to verify achievement of the objective? Once the objective is selected, may we change it during the grant term? For example, we choose to serve more people, but more people are not referred so instead we provide more on-the-job supports to those who need it.

Response: BRS expects the awarded CRPs to, at minimum, achieve a 30% increase in the number of individuals receiving supported employment or on-the-job supports short-term by end of year 2; OR a 30% increase in the amount or duration of supported employment or on-the-job supports short-term that consumers receive by end of year 2. Baseline data on both measures will be collected near the beginning of the contract term, and the CRP will be required to report on both measures throughout the contract term. BRS will seek feedback from selected CRPs on the specific measures and documentation the state will require to be submitted.

- Question: If we are awarded a contract in December, but it doesn't begin until March, may we begin the hiring process in January – February and can wages paid in January/February be funded by VR retroactively?
- Response: Establishment project funds may NOT be used retroactively for staffing or training costs. It is anticipated that Establishment project funds will be available beginning in March, 2017.
- Question: If we have NOT traditionally provided SE services and do not have long-term funding for SE, are we required to provide SE under this grant?
- Response: The CRP will be responsible for “at least a 30% increase in the number of individuals receiving supported employment or on-the-job supports short-term by end of year 2; OR a 30% increase in the amount or duration of supported employment or on-the-job supports short-term that consumers receive by end of year 2.” Please note that this measure includes an increase in either supported employment OR on-the-job supports short-term. These services are defined in the VR Manual of Employment Services. There is not a requirement that a provider offer ‘long-term’ funding in order to carry out VR-funded supported employment or on-the-job supports short-term services.
- Question: Will there be separate training regarding administration of this project? Will it require travel and/or overnight stays? Is it an allowable training expense?
- Response: Training sessions on the administration of the Establishment project will be provided by BRS via webinar platform, conference call and a 1:1 basis with the CRP, as needed. BRS does not anticipate that the CRP will have travel or lodging costs to participate in these sessions and should not include such costs in the proposal.
- Question: Are the training options currently offered by VR and their associated expenses allowable under this agreement?
- Response: The purpose of the Establishment project funding is NOT to cover the CRPs existing costs of training. Rather, Establishment project funds support costs associated with developing or enhancing training, and of training costs for newly hired staff. If the training mentioned in the question results in added costs of enhancing training for the CRP, they may be included. Additionally, training costs included in the proposal must enhance the effectiveness in providing VR employment services, including supported employment, to applicants or eligible individuals.

Question: Is time spent participating in webinars or online training an allowable expense and does it count toward the 25 hours of initial training and 10 hours of annual training mentioned in objective 1 on page 5?

Response: Online training and webinars are allowable to the extent it meets the minimum training requirements; however, online training and webinars will not meet the training requirements in full and must be supplemented with classroom-based training, hands-on training, and other appropriate training modalities and settings. The training should be person-centered and strength-based, allowing employment service staff, at a minimum, to develop the foundational competencies listed on page 4 of the RFF.

Question: If we are approved for an Establishment project, do we have to add all staff at one time or can they be added over time as referrals are received?

Response: Staffing may be added over time to enhance employment services; however, all appropriate staffing and training expenses need to be outlined in the proposal for the full 4-year project period.

Question: Over the past couple of years, local VRCs and Supervisors have indicated that the number of consumers applying for services and therefore the number of consumers on VRCs' caseloads has declined and that is why our referral numbers have been lower than in the past. If that is still the case, is it realistic to expect that our referral numbers could increase by 30% as referenced on page 5? What is VR doing to increase the number of people served so that this kind of increase will be feasible?

Response: The measurable objectives on page 5 states "at least a 30% increase in the number of individuals receiving supported employment or on-the-job supports short-term by end of year 2; OR a 30% increase in the amount or duration of supported employment or on-the-job supports short-term that consumers receive by end of year 2." None of the objectives require any increase in referral numbers to CRPs in order to be achieved. The referrals to VR have increased this past year on a statewide basis, though specific geographic areas of the state may have experienced a decrease. BRS anticipates that additional referrals to VR is likely given new requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA); however, BRS is not able to project the impact this may have on any specific provider.

Question: If we are funded and build capacity by adding staff and increasing internal training, but the numbers of referrals, and thus revenue achieved through ES payment points, do not

increase due to low VR caseload numbers or consumers choosing other providers, what are our options especially concerning sustainability?

Response: The VR share of Establishment project funding for staffing decreases in Years 2, 3 and 4 to assist CRP's with sustainability measures. BRS has received feedback from providers that staff capacity must increase to better serve existing consumers, to adequately provide Discovery services, and to provide adequate support to those with the most significant disabilities. With the change in the VR Employment service model, there is an expectation that Employment Specialists increase the intensity of services to consumers. Establishment projects are intended to build staff capacity to address this need.

Question: The emphasis in this RFF appears to be building capacity to serve the most severely disabled. Is this in preparation for the State of Indiana to go into Order of Selection?

Response: The focus of the RFF is to build or increase capacity of employment service staff and develop or enhance the foundational training of employment service staff to increase its effectiveness in providing VR employment services, including supported employment, to applicants or eligible individuals. This need has been identified as a result of evaluation and solicitation of feedback on the new VR Employment service model.

Question: Can we add projected staff in years, 2, 3 and 4 specifically around supported employment?

Response: Yes, however all staffing and training costs required to enhance employment services must be outlined in the four year cost proposal.

Question: Can you add or "phase in" additional positions in year 2 or 3 if we didn't put them in year 1?

Response: Yes, if it is anticipated that more employment staff will be needed in year 2, 3 and/or 4 to enhance the effectiveness in providing VR employment services, please list the anticipated staffing and training costs associated with the respective years.

Question: Since this is a multiyear project, can we request training funds for possible future training needs that is yet to be determined?

Response: The cost proposal should include projected Establishment project training costs for the full four-year project period. All training costs must be used to develop or enhance the

effectiveness in providing VR employment services, including supported employment, to applicants or eligible individuals. If awarded, the CRP will be responsible for developing and submitting a staff training plan within four (4) months of contract execution for all employment service staff for Objective 1 listed on page 5 of the RFF.

Question: One of the measureable objectives in the RFF is “Increased provision of supported employment services or on-the-job supports short-term, including at least a 30% increase in the number of individuals receiving supported employment or on-the-job supports short-term by end of year 2; or a 30% increase in the amount or duration of supported employment or on-the-job supports short-term that consumers receive by end of year 2.” What will happen if the provider does not receive enough referrals for individuals who are eligible for supported employment during this two year period to meet this objective?

Response: The measurable objectives on page 5 states “at least a 30% increase in the number of individuals receiving supported employment or on-the-job supports short-term by end of year 2; OR a 30% increase in the amount or duration of supported employment or on-the-job supports short-term that consumers receive by end of year 2.” None of the objectives require any increase in referral numbers to CRPs. Please note that this measure includes an increase in either supported employment OR on-the-job supports short-term. These services are defined in the VR Manual of Employment Services.

Question: Regarding the “Big Six” requirements to be addressed in the RFF (Page 7), I am unsure as to whether we should address strategies/activities/goals for the first year? Or for two years? (Not sure if they are one-year or two-year contracts.) Or for all four potentially funded years?

Response: The services requested in this RFF are expected to last for up to a two (2) year period, with a two (2) year renewal period, for a maximum 4-year contract period. This timeframe is subject to change. Contractors who fail to meet objectives in years 1-2 of the contract will be required to demonstrate corrective action prior to the contract being renewed for years 3-4.

Question: In the webinar it states the following: We believe it is plausible for an Agency to be for profit but; the Employment services unit could be nonprofit. How does that work? What are the day to day differences in the for profit and nonprofit?

Response: The Bureau is unable to provide feedback on transitioning from a for-profit to a non-profit entity and recommends consulting with legal counsel to fully understand the tax and legal implications.